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ABSTRACT

An estimated 27,700 private elementary and secondary schools were operating in the United States in fall 1983. Of these schools, 35 percent were Catholic, 36 percent other religious affiliation, and 29 percent not affiliated. The source of these data is a sample selected from a list of 27,000 schools and an area sample. The response for the list sample was 1,074 of 1,176 schools (91 percent). The area sample response was 733 of 901 schools (81 percent). Tables show number, percentage, and enrollment in private schools by size of school and by religious affiliation and instructional level. (MLF)

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Historical report

OERI

Center for Statistics
U.S. Department of Education
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Private Schools in the United States—Number, Enrollment and School Size: Fall, 1983

An estimated 27,700 private elementary and secondary schools were operating in the United States in fall 1983. As shown in table 1, this total was distributed almost equally among three categories: Religious affiliation, Catholic (35 percent); Religious affiliation, other (36 percent); and Not affiliated (29 percent).

When distributed by instructional level*, elementary schools comprise the largest group (56 percent). The secondary school group is smallest (9 percent). Elementary/secondary combined and "other" schools account for 19 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of the total number.

Private School Enrollment and School Size

The 4,548,000 students enrolled in the "religious affiliation" category of schools (including sub-categories "Catholic" and "Other affiliated") were almost four times the 1,167,200 students enrolled in schools categorized as "not affiliated." In other words, 80 percent of all private school students included in this survey attended schools affiliated with a religious organization. Of these, Catholic schools enrolled 56 percent; the "other affiliated" schools enrolled 24 percent.

Most private schools have small or moderate enrollments (table 2). Eighty-seven percent of them enrolled 400 or fewer students in 1983 (with 40 percent enrolling under 100 and 47 percent enrolling between 100–400). Only 13 percent enrolled more than 400 students.

School sizes show sharp contrast when examined by affiliation. Seventy percent of Catholic schools enrolled 100–400 students and 23 percent enrolled more than 400 students. Only 7 percent of Catholic schools enrolled fewer than 100 students. Meanwhile, 55 percent of the "other affiliated" schools and 60 percent of the "not affiliated" schools enrolled fewer than 100 students. About one-third of the private schools in each of the latter two categories enrolled from 100 to 400 students. Only a small percentage of the "other affiliated" (7 percent) and the "not affiliated" schools (9 percent) enrolled more than 400 students.

There were also distinct differences in school size by instructional level (see table 2). Some 90 percent of the private schools enrolling up to 400 students were classified at the elementary level. (This breaks down into 30 percent that enrolled less than 100 students and 60 percent that enrolled from 100 to 400). Secondary schools have less of a percentage range among the three size intervals: 21 percent enrolled under 100 students; 40 percent enrolled 100–400 students; and 38 percent enrolled more than 400 students.

The enrollment distribution pattern by school size shows that 59 percent of the private school students attended schools with enrollments no greater than 400; 9 percent were attending schools of less than 100 students (table 3).

The enrollment pattern, when examined by affiliation category, shows that only 2 percent of the Catholic school students attended schools of 100 students of less. Fifty-one percent of the Catholic students attended schools with enrollments of 100–400, and 47 percent attended schools which enrolled more than 400. The "other affiliated" and "not affiliated" private schools also had a small percentage of students in schools under 100—16 percent and 19 percent, respectively. Some 52 percent of the "other affiliated" students and 43 percent of the "not affiliated" students were in schools with enrollments of 100–400; another 33 percent and 38 percent, respectively, were in schools of more than 400 students.

Methodology

Overview of the Survey

The private school population was defined as those institutions meeting the following criteria:

1. Minimum length of school day had to be 4 hours;

*Instructional levels are defined in the methodology section

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2. Minimum length of school term had to be 160 days;
3. Instruction had to be provided to students at or above the first grade level and excluding schools that served the postsecondary population exclusively;
4. Instruction had to be provided at a site other than a private home; and
5. The school had to be privately administered.

The four categories for instructional level in this survey are defined as follows:

elementary — a school that has *no* grade *higher* than the 8th;

secondary — a school that has *no* grade *lower* than the 7th;

combined elementary secondary — a school that has grades higher than the 8th and lower than the 7th; and

other — a school that provides only alternative (non-traditional) instruction, special education, or vocational/technical curricula.

The sample was selected from two frames. A list developed from the 1980 private school survey was used as one frame (the list frame, totaling 27,000 schools). The list of counties, based on the 1980 population census data, was used as the second frame (the area frame, totaling 2,500 primary sampling units, or PSUs).

After a probability sample was selected from each frame, the schools from the list frame were asked to complete a long questionnaire; the schools in the area sample were asked to complete a shorter, but compatible, questionnaire.

The response rate for the list sample was 91 percent (1,074 of 1,176 schools). The response rate for the area sample was 81 percent (733 of 901 schools).

The responses were edited by Westat, Inc. to identify respondent and key entry errors. Problems not resolved by the machine edit were referred to the Center for Statistics (CS) for resolution. Imputations were made for item nonresponses.

The estimations for this survey required three procedures, one for each of the two frames (because the forms sent to the sample schools did not have the same number of questions) and one for the combined frames (when the same items appeared on each questionnaire). The estimates of totals were obtained as weighted sums of the values reported by the schools responding to the survey. The weights depend upon the probabilities of school selection and upon the rate of response.

Estimates of the sampling variance and the standard error were calculated for many of the variables. If the coefficient of variation was greater than 15 percent, then the data are reported but noted by an asterisk to indicate the lack of implied reliability.

Table 1.—Number and percentage distribution of private schools and estimated enrollments in the United States, by affiliation and instructional level: Fall 1983

Affiliation	Total		Instructional Level							
			Elementary		Secondary		Combined		Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
					Schools					
Totals	27,700	100	15,630	56	2,620	9	5,250	19	4,190	15
Religious affiliation	19,710	71	13,010	47	2,160	7	3,380	12	1,160	5
Catholic	9,740	35	7,900	29	1,490	5	190	1	160	1
Other	9,970	36	5,110	18	670	2	3,190	11	1,000	4
Not Affiliated	7,990	29	2,620	10	460	2	1,870	7	3,030	11
					Enrollment					
Totals	5,715,200	100	3,240,500	57	1,047,000	18	1,130,200	20	297,500	5
Religious affiliation	4,548,000	80	2,889,900	51	954,400	17	626,000	11	77,700	1
Catholic	3,192,200	56	2,260,100	40	848,500	15	70,100	1	13,500	0
Other	1,355,800	24	629,800	11	106,000	2	556,000	10	64,200	1
Not affiliated	1,167,200	20	350,600	6	92,600	2	504,200	9	219,800	4

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 2.—Number and percentage of private schools, by size of school and by religious affiliation and instructional level: Fall 1983

Size of school	Religious affiliation							
			Catholic		Other affiliated		Not affiliated	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total schools	27,700	100	9,740	100	9,970	100	7,990	100
under 100 students	10,890	40	700	7	5,430	55	4,760	60
100–400	13,090	47	6,750	70	3,810	38	2,520	32
401 or more	3,720	13	2,280	23	730	7	710	9

Size of school	Instructional level							
	Elementary		Secondary		El/Sec Combined		Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total schools	15,630	100	2,620	100	5,241	100	4,200	100
under 100	4,590	30	560	21	2,440	47	3,310	79
100–400	9,360	60	1,070	40	1,810	35	850	20
401 or more	1,680	11	1,000	38	1,000	19	40	1

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 3.—Enrollment in private schools, by size of school, and by religious affiliation and instructional level: Fall 1983

Size of school	Religious affiliation							
	Total		Catholic		Other affiliated		Not affiliated	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total enrollment	5,715,200	100	3,192,200	100	1,355,800	100	1,167,160	100
under 100 students	484,930	9	51,980	2*	210,930	16	222,020	19
100–400	2,829,670	50	1,625,100	51	704,350	52	500,210	43
401 or more	2,400,600	42	1,515,120	47	440,560	33	444,900	38

Size of school	Instructional level							
	Elementary		Secondary		El/Sec Combined		Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total enrollment	3,240,500	100	1,047,000	100	1,130,200	100	297,500	100
under 100	218,900	7	28,500	3*	101,700	9	135,800	45
100–400	2,072,040	63	244,800	23	378,265	34	134,570	45
401 or more	949,548	29	773,709	73	650,229	58	27,120	9*

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

*Coefficient of variation is greater than 0.15